

RUTHLESS ENFIELD SOON PUT UP THE SHUTTERS

Wycombe Wanderers 0, Enfield 2

WYCOMBE WANDERERS' supporters were given an object lesson in the basic rudiments of modern amateur football at Loakes Park on Saturday. Apparently, for a team to succeed nowadays, they must be prepared to be ruthless, unsporting and show venom in every tackle.

If these are the tactics which have brought Enfield the game's top honours — the Amateur Cup in 1967, third place in the 1966 table, fourth in 1967 — and to the brink of the 1968 Isthmian crown, Wanderers' fans would be quick to dissociate themselves from such attitudes were they ever put into practice at Loakes Park.

One is used to this code of conduct in the professional world where the stakes are high. Even in these days of "shamateurism" one would like to think that basically the players compete because they enjoy doing so. If success is measured along the lines Enfield adopted the amateur game has reached a new low.

To say there was not one ounce of sportsmanship and fair play about Enfield's performance would not be strictly true. There was just one slender thread to cling to which reminded patrons that the Enfield players were men with hearts instead of robots.

MERRICK HURT

'Keeper Wolstenholme kicked the ball out of play to allow Wanderers' trainer Jock Shepherd on the field so that he could attend to Les Merrick laid flat out on the deck. It is worth remembering that Merrick's injury had been caused by Moxton placing his knee firmly in the middle of Les' back.

For the majority of the match, however, Enfield showed scant respect for referee Mr. D. W. Jackson, always questioning decisions and kicking the ball away in anger when they were penalised. No doubt a tougher and firmer line by Mr. Jackson would have stamped out a lot of this unnecessary gamesmanship.

The match was dotted with incidents which referee Mr. Jackson failed to see. There was far too much action off the ball with players battling out their own personal duels.

It seems incredible that Enfield, who currently have a six-point lead at the top of the table, should resort to such unnecessary tactics. In rare flashes they produced some fluent and sparkling football, ample proof that they could be worthy champions. In Eire international John Connell, they possess a fiery individual who could turn a match on his own and in Olympic wing-half Johnny Payne, a player with class and subtlety.

For the opening minutes Wycombe looked the more composed of the two teams but in their first real raid, after seven minutes, Enfield were presented with the lead. Adams helped on a short corner into the goalmouth, where a mix-up between 'keeper Bunting and Baker ended with the wing-half heading into his own net. Gale nearly gave a repeat performance a few minutes later but fortunately, this time, Bunting held the ball on the line.

Enfield, with a flexible 4-3-3 system, often left only two men behind waiting for the half-chance. In the 22nd minute Thompson could only head back a Reid free-kick and as Bunting advanced to gather, Adams whipped in quickly with a suspect challenge. Consequently the 'keeper dropped the ball and as Fry moved in for the kill Rundle

tackled strongly and the ball ran loose to Connell who stroked in a 15-yard drive into the roof of the net.

After this goal Enfield were quite prepared to consolidate their position; not really caring how they achieved it, with the result that too much physical contact crept in.

LUCKY WOLSTENHOLME

What was badly needed was a Wycombe goal which would have opened the game right out once more. Samuels nearly supplied the goods shortly before the interval when Holmes fired over a cross and Keith saw his smart header somewhat luckily saved by Wolstenholme, who scrambled the ball away to safety with one hand.

A goal at this psychological moment would have done wonders for Wycombe, but they were denied the chance to go in at half-time with their morale boosted. Wolstenholme again saved his side on the stroke of half-time when he literally plunged at Holmes' feet to snatch the ball off the winger's boot.

Not surprisingly the tempo drained away in the second period as Enfield packed their defence with Wycombe unable to make any real use of their territorial advantage.

Wanderers' forwards showed little imagination in how to penetrate a packed defensive zone, although to be fair, they were not receiving the support they should have been entitled to from wing-halves Baker and Thompson, whose distribution was often erratic.

Wycombe Wanderers: C. Bunting; I. Rundle, C. Gale; B. Baker, V. Faulkner, S. Thompson; L. Worley, V. Busby, L. Merrick, K. Samuels, S. Holmes.

Wycombe 0 Enfield 2

FAVOURITES for the Isthmian League title, Enfield collected a couple of bonus points against energetic but off-target Wycombe. Wycombe, dictating for much of the game, did three-quarters of the attacking, but without their injured striker Horseman they wasted all their energy.

A Wycombe defensive misunderstanding put Enfield in the lead in the eighth minute when right half Baker put the ball through his own goal after Wycombe had done all the early attacking. And half an hour later Connell clinched it when he steered the ball in from the edge of the area after a goalmouth mêlée.